The Solo Vocal Songs of Richard Wagner: A Pedagogical Guide for Use in the Voice Studio

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

THE SOLO VOCAL SONGS OF RICHARD WAGNER: A PEDAGOGICAL GUIDE
FOR USE IN THE VOICE STUDIO

By
Sarah Theresa Shipkowski Wee

A DOCTORAL ESSAY

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
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The solo vocal songs of Richard Wagner are an under-performed part of the standard classical vocal repertoire. In this paper, fifteen of Richard Wagner’s solo vocal songs have been researched and analyzed. The orchestrated solo works, fragments, songs with chorus, arias or operatic compositions of Richard Wagner were not considered in this paper. The background of each song is addressed including what was going on in Wagner’s life at the time they were written, and any note-worthy information about the poet of the text, or the text itself. A poetic translation of each text has been included. The songs are examined based on vocal requirements such as: range, tessitura, dynamic range, composer’s markings and special techniques, melodic and rhythmic aspects of the vocal line, text and diction, and suggested voice categories. Additionally, the piano accompaniments for each piece are analyzed and categorized. The songs discussed in this paper contain many of the styles, colors, and textures that Wagner would later use in his operas. These songs are a form of “Wagner in miniature” that allow a student to experience Wagnerian vocal music without the risk of injury to the vocal folds that is possible from attempting his arias. It is true that Wagnerian operatic works are not appropriate for every voice; however, his art songs are accessible to a large population of singers and in many ways are not any more challenging
than the art songs that act as foundations of the standard vocal repertoire. Adding awareness of Wagnerian art songs helps diversify the standard repertoire list and provide a good introduction to the world of Wagnerian music to voice students and teachers.
Preface and Acknowledgements

The vocal music of Richard Wagner is something that I am extremely passionate about and I’ve always wanted to sing his operas and be a “Wagnerian”. Wagnerian singing is exemplified by the vigorous and booming singing of large operatic voices, and Wagnerian operatic repertoire requires a very powerful voice from a singer who has a great deal of both vocal and physical stamina. This type of high-effort singing has often received a bad reputation in the opera world for the potential risk of injury to singers.

It is because of this bias that I was initially fearful of singing Wagnerian operatic repertoire. However, I still wanted to sing Wagner’s music and experience his compositional style and color. I began to look for “Wagner in miniature” and came upon his art songs. These songs are pedagogically appropriate for many singers and give a taste of the Wagnerian style without being as vocally taxing as his operatic repertoire. Unfortunately, Wagner art songs are largely absent from the standard vocal literature and that is something that I hope to change.

I want to thank several people for their help in this project. Firstly, to my husband Adam, thank you for everything. Without your support, I could not have done this. You kept the house and our lives going while I wrote and sang. To my daughter, Charlie, thank you for being so patient while Mommy did homework. To my parents, thank you for all your support – from my very first piano lesson 25 years ago until now, you’ve been my biggest cheerleaders.

To my committee, Dr. Esther Jane Hardenbergh, Alan Johnson, Robynne Redmon, and Dr. Karen Henson, thank you for your help and support in this writing process. I’m especially grateful to my committee chair and teacher, Dr. Esther Jane
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The bulk of German vocal repertoire used for teaching is dominated by such composers as Brahms, Schubert, and Schumann. *The Lieder Anthology*, edited by Virginia Saya and Richard Walters and published by Hal Leonard, the world’s largest educational music publisher and the leading publisher of songbooks and sheet music¹, contains pieces by: Ludwig van Beethoven, Johannes Brahms, Robert Franz, Gustav Mahler, Alma Schindler Mahler, Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, Felix Mendelssohn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Franz Schubert, Clara Wieck Schumann, Robert Schumann, Richard Strauss and Hugo Wolf.² The five volumes of *Standard Vocal Literature* also edited by Richard Walters and published by Hal Leonard, which are compiled by voice type, do not contain any other German lieder composers than the ones compiled in *The Lieder Anthology*.³ The Joan Boytim repertoire collections for each voice, *The First Book of Solos*⁴ and *The Second Book of Solos*⁵, have a similar list of German song compositions. The songs of Richard Wagner (1813-1883) are uncommon in the bulk of German vocal repertoire. Richard Wagner wrote twenty-two non-operatic concert vocal works for piano and voice that include solo song, spoken melodrama, choral pieces with

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and without solos, and two incomplete fragments.\textsuperscript{6} These songs are largely absent from the standard German lieder repertoire collections.

In addition to his German pieces, Richard Wagner also wrote eight French solo concert vocal pieces for piano and voice. None of these pieces are represented in \textit{The French Song Anthology}, published by Hal Leonard and edited by Carol Kimball and Richard Walters.\textsuperscript{7} These pieces are also absent from the French selections in \textit{The Standard Vocal Literature} series and the Joan Boytim \textit{First Book of Solos} and \textit{Second Book of Solos} series. These anthologies are often used in the vocal teaching studio as introductions to various repertoire.

Art songs are an integral part of the vocal repertoire and the voice education experience, and most voice lessons are structured as a mixture of both vocalises and repertoire work. Carol Kimball discusses the need for working on song literature in a 2014 article for \textit{The Journal of Singing} titled “Why Sing Art Songs?” Kimball argues that one of the main reasons to sing art songs is to work on the poetry of text. Art songs are typically smaller forms than arias and provide a condensed opportunity to work on text. Kimball also states that art songs help students to work on their imaginations, inquire as to why a composer wrote something the way they did, and to notice the small nuances in a piece.\textsuperscript{8}

Kimball says that art song repertoire is endless, but that some pieces have been “marred by overexposure in uninspired student performances in vocal studios and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{6} Richard Wagner, \textit{Sämtliche Lieder Mit Klavierbegleitung = Complete Lieder for Voice and Piano} (New York, NY: Schott, 1982).
\item \textsuperscript{7} Carol Kimball and Richard Walters, \textit{The French Song Anthology : High Voice} (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2001). This anthology is also published in a Low Voice edition.
\end{itemize}
repertory classes”. This song overexposure is a reason to be constantly seeking out new repertoire, to continue finding new songs to inspire both voice students and audiences. Kimball concludes the article by saying that studying art songs makes singers “more complete musical artists” who are more in tune with the text of the pieces and that young singers need to be singing art songs.9

**Problem Statement:**

Voice teachers are regularly looking for repertoire appropriate for each individual student. The chosen repertoire provides opportunity for learning new skills, and exposure to text, language, and different musical periods. Many teachers are unaware of the songs of Richard Wagner. This is likely due to the fact that Wagner song is largely absent from the commonly studied German lieder and French song repertoire. Much has been written about Richard Wagner’s operas and one of his art song sets, *The Wesendonck Lieder*, but little has been written about his other art songs.

**Justification:**

Richard Wagner is well-known for his substantial contributions to the operatic repertoire, but he also wrote song literature. Much has been written about the “*Fünf Lieder nach Gedichten von Mathilde Wesendonck*”, known as the *Wesendonck Lieder*, set to poetry by Mathilde Wesendonck. The *Wesendonck Lieder* are the most frequently performed Wagner songs, but little has been written about Richard Wagner’s other non-operatic solo vocal pieces.10 *The Research and Information Guide of Richard Wagner: Second Edition* written by Michael Saffle in 2010 states: “With the exception of the so-

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9 Ibid.
called Wesendonck-Lieder WWV 91, Wagner’s concert works for voice are even less familiar than his instrumental compositions, no survey study of them exists in print”.11 Research into Richard Wagner’s non-operatic vocal works provides useful information about repertoire that has been neglected in the standard vocal literature.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this paper is to provide a pedagogical guide to the non- orchestral and non-operatic solo vocal works of Richard Wagner, and in doing so increase awareness of these pieces that remain uncommon in the standard vocal repertoire.

**Methodology:**

Fifteen of the published non-operatic vocal works of Richard Wagner for solo voice and piano will be included in this paper. These Sämtliche Werke will be examined for use in the vocal teaching studio based on voice requirements such as: range, tessitura, dynamic range, composer’s markings and special techniques, melodic and rhythmic aspects of the vocal line, text and diction, and suggested voice categories. These considerations were chosen following the methodology used by Dr. Esther Jane Hardenbergh in her dissertation “The Solo Vocal Repertoire of Richard Hundley: A Pedagogical and Performance Guide to the Published Works.”12 For continuity purposes, this paper will use the pitch designation of C4 as middle C. These songs will be discussed chronologically to show the compositional development of Richard Wagner. In addition to the pedagogical analysis, the biographical background of each piece will be

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discussed including biographical information about the poet when possible and a poetic translation of the text.

The piano accompaniment of each piece will be analyzed for level of difficulty within the categories of easy, moderate, or difficult. These levels of difficulty are defined using the criteria listed in by Dr. Esther Jane Hardenbergh in her dissertation on the solo vocal repertoire of Richard Hundley.13

Easy is defined as:

1. Accompaniments generally lie within a 5-finger position
2. Simple rhythms and a similarity of speed, dynamics and texture throughout the piece
3. Similar patterns in both hands
4. Limited keyboard range
5. Limited use of counterpoint
6. Few double intervals within the hand
7. Use of simple harmonic progressions

Moderate is defined as:

1. Triads in one hand only
2. 2 independent voices
3. Parallel intervals
4. Single melody with accompaniment
5. Contrast of touch and dynamics between hands
6. Expansion and contraction of hand from 5-finger position
7. Ornaments used for expressive purpose-especially mordents, turns, and short trills
8. Variety of speeds, dynamics and textures

Difficult is defined as:

1. Four note chords
2. 3 or more independent voices
3. Rapid changes of intervals
4. Complex layers of voices
5. Extreme and complex changes of speeds, dynamics and textures
6. Contrast of touch and dynamics within the same hand
7. Frequent changes of hand spacings
8. Ornaments used for virtuosity

13 Ibid., 22-23.
**Delimitations:**

This paper will focus only on the completed solo non-operatic vocal works of Richard Wagner that are available for voice and piano. The orchestrated solo works will not be discussed, nor will any fragments, songs with chorus, arias or operatic compositions.

**Related Literature:**

Carol Kimball’s book *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* is a frequently consulted book in the voice studio and a required text for many art song literature classes. The songs of Richard Wagner are addressed in this guide, but only the five *Wesendonck Lieder*, “Mignonne”, and “Les deux Grenadiers”. There is brief biographical information and a short description of each song, but this is not a pedagogical guide. Kimball also addresses the lack of a substantial Wagner song collection saying “Richard Wagner’s interest in composing song was perfunctory; his musical style did not easily adapt to smaller forms.”

Sergius Kagen compiled a large collection of repertoire lists titled *Music for the Voice: A Descriptive List of Concert and Teaching Material*. In this extensive book, Wagner’s non-operatic works are rarely mentioned. In fact, besides the *Wesendonck Lieder*, only “Dors, mon enfant” and “Les deux grenadiers” are evaluated with a footnote to see also “Mignonne”, “Attente”, and “Der Tannenbaum” which are not evaluated in the book. This book discusses the range, tessitura, voice type, and gives very brief

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remarks or background on the pieces. This is not a complete pedagogical guide to these songs.

Noni Espina’s collection *Repertoire for the Solo Voice: A fully annotated guide to works for the solo voice published in modern editions and covering material from the 13th century to the present* again only mentions the *Wesendonck Lieder*, “Dors, mon enfant” and “Les deux grenadiers”. This book offers a more complete look at the songs mentioning range, tessitura, text, dynamic requirements, accompaniment, and voice type.

There are several articles and dissertations discussing the *Wesendonck Lieder*, substantiating the claim by Grove that these are the most popular pieces of Wagner’s vocal writing. Michael Saffle’s *The Research and Information Guide of Richard Wagner Second Edition* mentions several references that discuss Wagner’s solo vocal works. There is an article by musicologist Egon Voss entitled “‘Das hat etwas zu bedeuten!’ ‘Les deux grenadiers’ und ‘Die bieden Grenadiere,’” which is a comparison of the Schumann and Wagner settings of the same text. It lacks musical examples and focuses mostly on phrase structures, rhythmic figures, and text settings. *Festschrift Walter Wiora zum 90. Geburtstag (30. Dezember 1996)* has a chapter on the French romances of Richard Wagner which is largely biographical, with a few musical examples, and little pedagogical analysis.

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Das Liebesmahl der Apostel. This piece is for male choir and is orchestrated, therefore it will not be addressed in this paper. Lotte Lehmann’s book on song interpretation Eighteen Song Cycles: studies in their interpretation has a large section on the Wesendonck Lieder but does not address any of the other songs of Richard Wagner.

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

**Bel canto vs. German School of Singing**

One issue to consider when looking at the solo vocal works of Richard Wagner is what style of singing Wagner himself wanted to be used in his songs. There are clear national differences in the approaches used in teaching singers. In Richard Miller’s seminal text on the different National Schools of Singing, he looks in great detail at the differences in nationalistic approaches in terms of breath, diction, alignment, and other pedagogical considerations. These four National Schools of Singing are recognized in the vocal community and defined by Richard Miller as: English, French, German, and Italian.\(^{21}\) Each of these schools have differences in the vocal pedagogy techniques they utilize in teaching. Wagnerian singing is often associated with the German School of Singing. However, in his writing Wagner states that he preferred the Italian bel canto style of singing to the German style.\(^{22}\) Therefore, it could be suggested that his arts songs should be approached with a bel canto technique in contrary to the style often used in his operatic repertoire. The differences between these schools and when to use certain techniques is a highly complex and controversial discussion that is mentioned in dissertations, scholarly articles, and voice pedagogy books.

The Grove Dictionary of Music defines bel canto as “referring to the Italian vocal style of the 18\(^{th}\) and early 19\(^{th}\) centuries, the qualities of which include perfect legato production throughout the range, the use of a light tone in the higher registers and agile


and flexible delivery”. Conversely, the German School of Singing is based in the choral singing tradition, is more declamatory with emphasis placed on text, and is often characterized by a muscular approach to respiration, overexpansion of the chest, and a darker tonal preference. One of the defining characteristics of the German School of Singing is in use of the breath. The most controversial theory of breath control is that of *Stauprinzip* (stemming principle). This concept is also called *glottal-damming* or *breath-damming*. In their book, *Voice-Speech Language*, Dr. Richard Luchsinger and Dr. Godfrey Edward Arnold recount how in the first part of the twentieth century, singers and their teachers became excited about this new technique but also found it to be quite confusing. This *Stauprinzip* has been greatly debated and is the primary reason that most vocal pedagogues are leery of the German school and its effects on the health of the vocal folds. Vocal pedagogue Richard Miller defines the concept of *Stauprinzip* and its popularity this way:

> Breath damming is a technique of breath retention through marked sub-glottal muscular pressures. The flow of breath is stemmed by the glottis as a result of muscular tension similar to that experienced in a painful groan or grunt...this method may not claim as many followers among German singers in the present decade as in the past, yet a long list of successful German singers in this century have given allegiance to it. A number of today’s *Heldentenore* are numbered among its practitioners.

Although Richard Miller states that some *Heldentenore*, a term used to describe the type of voice that is necessary for certain of Wagner’s heroic tenor roles, use this

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26 Ibid.
central tenant of the German School of Singing, Wagner himself did not want his music sung in this style.\(^\text{28}\) Vocal pedagogy historian James Stark quotes Wagner’s preference for *bel canto* vocal production saying:

In the early years of his career, Wagner wrote an essay called ‘Pasticcio, by Canto Spianato’ (1834), in which he extolled ‘the old Italian mode of song’ with its sostenuto, dexterity, and character.’ He criticized the modern school, especially in Germany. ‘Today one hardly ever hears a truly beautiful and finished trillo; very rarely a perfect mordent; very seldom a well-rounded coloratura, a genuine unaffected, soul-stirring portamento, a complete equalization of the vocal register and perfect maintenance of intonation through the varying nuance of increase and diminution in the volume of sound’.\(^\text{29}\)

According to Miller, another controversial theory of the German school has to do with pharyngeal positioning and the sensation of an open throat caused by a forced and fixed laryngeal position. It is believed that increased room in the throat results in a richer and fuller sound that is more in line with the desired vocal qualities of the German school. Teachers of the German method have many expressions and sayings to try to get their students to open their throats. “Widen in the back”, “imagine that the throat is a cave” and “send the tone down the spine” are all quotes from voice teachers that Richard Miller shares in his book on the National Schools of Singing. The purpose of these sayings are to induce posterial sensation which will help to enlarge the pharynx. It is believed that this open pharyngeal positional is optimal for the acoustics for singing.\(^\text{30}\)

These two schools of singing, *bel canto* and German, vary from one another in terms of breath technique, pharyngeal positioning, desired sound quality, and many other technical approaches. Honoring Wagner’s stated preference for the old Italian style of


\(^{29}\) Stark, *Bel Canto*, xxiii.

singing believing it resulted in equalization of registers and beautiful tone, enables all
students to experience Wagnerian repertoire without needing to have been trained in the
German style.
Chapter 3: Pedagogical Analysis

Sieben Kompositionen zu Goethes Faust, Op.5

Richard Wagner wrote his first set of songs in 1831, *Sieben Kompositionen zu Goethes Faust, Op. 5*. These pieces were written for a performance of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s (1749-1832) tragic play, *Faust*. Wagner’s eldest sister Rosalie Wagner inspired these songs after he saw her performing the role of Gretchen at the Leipzig premiere of *Faust* in 1829. Two of the pieces in this set, “Meine Ruh ist hin” and “Melodram Gretchens” were dedicated to Rosalie. When he compiled these pieces in 1831, Wagner was enrolled in the music program at Leipzig University and studying composition privately with Christian Theodor Weinlig, Kantor of the Thomaskirche. The seven songs are a mix of choral pieces, solo pieces, pieces that are a mixture of solo and choir, and a spoken melodrama. The text all comes from Part One of Goethe’s tragedy *Faust*.

The seven pieces are:

1. “Lied der Soldaten”
2. “Bauer unter der Linde”
3. “Branders Lied”
4. “Lied des Mephistopheles I”
5. “Lied des Mephistopheles II”
6. “Meine Ruh ist hin”
7. “Melodram Gretchens”

This paper will only focus on Richard Wagner’s solo non-operatic vocal-piano works, therefore only two pieces of this set will be analyzed: “Lied des Mephistopheles

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“II” and “Meine Ruh is hin”. “Lied der Soldaten” is written for four-part chorus, “Bauer unter der Linde” is written for four-part chorus with soprano solo and tenor solo, “Branders Lied” is written for low male voice and unison chorus, “Lied des Mephistopheles I” is written for low male voice and chorus, and “Melodram Gretchens” is a spoken melodrama written for a female voice.
“Lied des Mephistopheles II”:

“Lied des Mephistopheles II” (Song of Mephistopheles, II) is the fifth song in Sieben Kompositionen zu Goethes Faust Op. 5. This short, delightful, humorous character piece is strophic in form and uses bouncy rhythmic motives and clever text setting to portray the devilish humor of Mephistopheles.

**Voice Requirements**

“Lied des Mephistopheles II” is written for low male voice and has a range of only an octave, B2-B3. The tessitura lies mostly in the middle to upper part of the staff, E3-B3. There are no dynamic markings indicated for the singer. The melody is largely scalar with step-wise ascending and descending passages. These scalar moments are typically parts of the major scale, with a few contrasting measures that utilize the chromatic scale (ex. 1a mm. 7-11).

![ex. 1a](image)

The song is strophic with two verses that are nearly identical in terms of melody and rhythm. There is one notable rhythmic change between measures 3-4 and the matching measure 19, accommodating the word stress (ex. 1b mm. 3-4, mm. 19).

![ex. 1b](image)
Text

“Lied des Mephistopheles II” has two stanzas of text. The tempo marking is Mässig geschwind (moderately quick) which requires crisp text production. The text, which comes from Part One Scene Nineteen of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s tragedy Faust, is written in a very declamatory style with short phrases and rests for emphasis. In this scene, Gretchen’s door is being guarded by her soldier brother. Faust and Mephistopheles want to get Gretchen’s attention so Mephistopheles says that he will sing a few bars to help seduce her. In the song, he talks about a young woman named Catherine who will enter her lover’s door as a maiden but she will not leave that way.34

Was machst du mir vor Liebchens Tür, What are you doing before your beloved’s door, Kathrinchen, hier little Catherine, here bei frühem Tagesblicke? in the early daybreak? Lass, lass es sein! Don’t do it! Er lsssst dich ein, He lets you in, als Mädchen ein, as a maiden, als Mädchen nicht zurücke. as a maiden he will not let you out.

Nehmt euch in Acht! Be careful! Ist es vollbracht, Once the deed is done, dann gute Nacht then all is over ihr armen, armen Dinger! you poor, poor thing! Habt ihr euch lieb, You love each other, tut keinem Dieb don’t do something for a scoundrel nur nichts zu Lieb’, only nothing for love, als mit dem Ring am Finger. as if there were a ring on your finger.

Translation by: Bard Suverkrop35

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Accompaniment

The accompaniment for “Lied des Mephistopheles II” is easy-moderate. It does not stay in a five-finger position, but there are triads in only one hand and the rhythm is simple and repetitive. The speed and texture stays the same throughout the piece. There are a few moments where the dynamic changes from *piano* to *forte* for a single chord, but those are the only dynamic changes in the accompaniment (ex 1c mm. 21-24). If not for the expansion from the five-finger position, this accompaniment would get a classification of easy.

ex 1c
“Meine Ruh ist hin”

“Meine Ruh ist hin” (My peace is gone) is the sixth song in Sieben Kompositionen zu Goethes Faust Op. 5 and is dedicated to Richard Wagner’s sister Rosalie. The lyrical, ascending, ever intensifying lines provide the foundation for the dramatic expression of the poor victimized Gretchen and her desperate situation.

**Voice Requirements**

The range of ”Meine Ruh ist hin” is D4-G5. The tessitura lies in the middle to upper part of the staff, mostly G4-Eb5. The melody is tonal with brief moments of chromaticism and many repeated themes. The repetition is representative of the spinning of Gretchen’s spinning wheel, and her mind as she slowly sinks into madness. There are very few dynamic markings for the singer, but there are tempo changes which reflect the text and her psychological state. The starting tempo is marked, *Leidenschaftlich, doch nicht zu schnell* (passionate, but not too fast). The piece has four tempo changes: *Allmählich immer schneller* (gradually always faster), *etwas langsamer* (somewhat slower), *etwas schneller* (somewhat faster), and *langsamer* (slower). These changes in tempo mirror Gretchen’s inability to focus and her obsession over Faust. The breathlessness of the frantic Gretchen is demonstrated musically through the use of rests and rhythmic complexity (ex 2a, mm. 11-15).

ex 2a

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\[\text{Musical notation image}\]
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Mein armer Kopf ist mir ver-rückt mein arm-er Sinn ist mir zer-stückt
The text for this piece has been set more than fifty times by different composers. Among the various titles are “Meine Ruh ist hin”, “Lied Gretchens”, and “Gretchen am Spinnrade”. Franz Schubert’s 1814 setting of this text, “Gretchen am Spinnrade”, is perhaps the most well-known. The song text comes from Part One Scene Fifteen of Goethe’s *Faust*. The scene takes place in Gretchen’s room where we see her sitting at her spinning wheel, alone.

Meine Ruh’ ist hin,  
mein Herz ist schwer;  
Ich finde sie nimmer  
und nimmermehr.  

My peace is gone,  
my heart is heavy;  
I will find it never  
and never-more.

Wo ich ihn nicht hab,  
ist mir das Grab,  
die ganze Welt  
ist mir vergällt.  

Where I do not have him,  
that is the grave to me,  
the whole world  
has for me turned bitter.

Mein armer Kopf  
ist mir verrückt,  
mein armer Sinn  
ist mir zerstückt.  

My poor head  
has to me gone mad,  
my poor mind  
is to me torn apart.

Nach ihm nur schau ich  
zum Fenster hinaus,  
nach ihm nur geh’ ich  
aus dem Haus.  

I look only for him  
out the window,  
only for him do I go  
out of the house.

Sein hoher Gang,  
sein edle Gestalt,  
seines Mundes Lächeln,  
seiner Augen Gewalt,  
und seiner Rede Zauberfluss,  
sein Händedruck,  
und ach, sein Kuss!  

His superior way of walking,  
his noble figure,  
his mouth’s smile,  
his eyes’ power,  
And his speech magic flow,  
his handclasp,  
and ah! His kiss!

Mein Busen drängt sich  
nach ihm hin.  
Ach, dürft ich fassen  
und halten ihn!  

My bosom presses itself onward to him.  
Ah, might I grasp  
and hold him!
und küsse ihn, And kiss him,  
so wie ich willt, as much as I want, 
an seinen Küssen from his kisses  
vergehen sollt! I would die!

Translation by: Bard Suverkrop

Accompaniment

The accompaniment for “Meine Ruh ist hin” is difficult. There are four note chords, frequent tremolos in the left hand, and many tempo changes. There are sudden dynamic changes throughout the accompaniment with ten subito forte in a fifty-five measure piece (ex 2b, mm. 48-51). The piano acts as a character in this piece, the spinning wheel. The accompaniment needs to be well-played to help tell the story and give music to the desperation that Gretchen is feeling.

ex 2b

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“Der Tannenbaum”

In 1838, Richard Wagner wrote the song “Der Tannenbaum” (The fir tree), set to text by Georg Scheurlin, about whom little is known. This piece was written during a tumultuous point in Wagner’s life. He was living in Riga, a Latvian town colonized by the Germans, and working as the musical director for the theatre there. He was living in a small apartment with his wife, Minna, and her sister, Amalie. Richard Wagner married actress Christine Wilhelmine (Minna) Planer in 1836, but their marriage was not a happy one. Minna left him for another man mere months after their marriage, but reunited with Wagner in Riga.37

In his autobiography, Mein Leben, Wagner speaks of this period in his life very matter of factly and optimistically. It is important to note that this autobiography was narrated by Wagner as he reminisced about his life. This makes it challenging to verify the truth of these recollections, but it is an interesting look into Wagner’s opinions about himself and his life. In 1838, Wagner had forgiven Minna for her infidelity and they returned to a relatively peaceful married life. During this time, they had very little money, yet Wagner says he rejoiced at the sight of their humble home. As they were childless, they decided a dog was a necessity for the house. But, in very eccentric Wagner style, they chose to adopt a wolf cub instead of a dog. This pairing did not last very long. However, the household changed drastically during this period in Riga when Amalie became engaged to a Russian Army officer. Wagner talks about this event saying:

The unfortunate part of this engagement, however, was that it caused many difficulties, and brought the first cloud over our menage a trois. For, after a while, the two sisters quarreled bitterly, and I had the very unpleasant experience

37 Millington, Wagner, Grove Music Online.
of living for a whole year in the same house with two relatives who neither saw
nor spoke to each other. 38

Voice Requirements

“Der Tannenbaum” is in Eb-minor. The range of this song is Bb3-Eb5. “Der
Tannenbaum” is most often sung by a baritone or mezzo-soprano but the range does not
exclusively limit to these voice types. The tessitura lies mostly on the staff in middle-
voice. The melody is tonal with repeating sections and moments of chromaticism. The
dirge-like quality of this piece is shown in the melody by the use of minor seconds in
repeated chanting measures (ex 3a, mm. 31-35).

ex 3a

“Der Tannenbaum” is written from the point of view of three characters, a young
boy, an old fir tree, and a narrator. These characters are set in juxtaposing styles. The
young boy’s music is more rhythmically complex with a faster pace, a fitting text
painting of an excited child (ex 3b, mm. 20-23). The fir tree’s music has a slower tempo
and a smaller range, most of his text is written stepwise or in thirds. This shows the sad,
melancholy, and ancient feeling of the tree (ex 3c, mm. 40-43). The narrator’s music is a
mix of these two characters, mimicking the sound of both. This voice is more
rhythmically complex than the tree, but less excited than the young boy.

38 Richard Wagner, *My Life: Complete* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016),
111.
“Der Tannenbaum”, set from a poem by Georg Scheurlin, is exceptionally expressive. The text describes a sad fir tree who watches a boy in a boat on a lake. The boy asks the tree why he is so sad and the tree responds, “Already the ax seeks me for your coffin, that is what makes me always so troubled, lad, I am thinking of you.” This haunting text is well-suited to the rich harmonies and chromatic accompaniment of the piece. As previously mentioned, this song has a narrator and two clearly defined characters. It is important to make sure the audience feels a distinct difference between the two characters, the young boy and the old fir tree.

Der Tannenbaum steht schweigend,  
einsam auf grauer Höh’:  
der Knabe schaukelt im Nachen,  
entlang dem blauen See.

Tief in sich selbst versunken  
die Tanne steht und sinnt,  
der Knabe, kos’t der Welle,  
die schäumend vorüberriesnt.

“Du Tannenbaum dort oben,  
du alter finst’rer Gesel’,

The pine tree stands silent,  
alone on the grey height;  
the boy rocks in a small boat  
across the blue lake.

Deeply absorbed in itself  
the pine tree stands and ponders,  
the boy caresses the waves,  
that foaming flow by.

“You pine tree up there,  
you dark old fellow,
“Dass schon die Axt mich suchet, 
zur Zumenschrein, 
das macht mich stets so trübe, 
gedenk’ ich, Knabe, dein.”

“Already the ax seeks me, 
for your coffin, 
that is what makes me always so troubled, 
lad, I am thinking of you.”

Translation by: Bard Suverkrop

Accompaniment

The accompaniment for “Der Tannenbaum” is difficult. There are some four-note chords, many moments of arpeggiated chromaticism, and frequent changes in hand spacing. These chromatic arpeggiated patterns serve as text painting for the moving water discussed in the text (ex 3d, mm. 9). Ensemble could pose a challenge in this piece as there are several moments where the singer is singing a note that is a minor second off from the accompaniment. This requires a secure, more mature singer who will not be lead astray by the piano.
Trois Melodies

Wagner’s Trois Melodies, were published in Paris in 1840 after some of his friends suggested that he compose some songs that might be successful salon pieces. These pieces were published by August Lewald, editor of the monthly Europa. Wagner was paid a small fee for these songs, the first he had ever received for one of his compositions. Trois Melodies is comprised of the pieces “Dors, mon enfant”, “L’Attente”, and “Mignonne”. Although Wagner was mildly fond of these songs saying, “I have no reason to be ashamed of these small pieces”, these songs were not popular at the time. In his autobiography, Wagner discusses his challenges in finding singers for these pieces saying:

“…I now began searching for singers for my new compositions. Mme Pauline Viardot, to whom I first turned, went through my pieces very amiably, did not fail to express approval of them, yet assured me she saw no occasion for performing them. The same thing happened to me with Mme Widman, who sang my Dors, mon enfant for me most tenderly in her lovely contralto, yet still couldn’t figure out what more she might do. A certain M. Dupont, third tenor at the Opéra, tried my Ronsard setting but opined that the linguistic style would not appeal to the modern Paris public.”

One of the reasons that these pieces were not very popular when they were first written is that Wagner composed them in his usual German manner, with only slightly less heaviness to appeal to the French public.

41 Richard, Wagner, My Life, 198.
42 Ibid., 129.
43 Ibid., 174.
“Dors, mon enfant”

The enchanting and haunting lullaby, “Dors, mon enfant” (Sleep, my child), is the first piece in *Trois melodies*. All that is known about the author of the text, whose name is unknown, is that he was a young poet acquaintance of Wagner’s friend E.G. Anders. Anders was a professor in the music department of the Bibliotheque Royale. This was the first piece that Wagner set in French and he was quite happy with it. In his autobiography, he says that “it was so successful that, when I had tried it over softly several times on the piano, my wife who was in bed, called out to me that it was heavenly for sending one to sleep.”

**Voice Requirements**

The range of “Dors, mon enfant” is D4-F5 and the tessitura lies mostly on the staff. The melody is often step-wise and chromatic with very few large leaps. There are grace notes written throughout the piece that give the melody almost a yodeling quality that paints the picture of the weeping mother (ex 4a, mm. 7-10). The tempo marking for this piece is *demi-voix* which is more of a vocal quality suggestion than a tempo. *Demi-voix* means half-voice and brings an important color and dynamic to this lullaby. The second half of the piece is marked *voix tremblante*, in a trembling voice. These markings are something to consider when assigning this piece to a student.

**ex 4a**

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The text for “Dors, mon enfant” is melancholy and sad. This piece is best sung by a female singer as the narrator is a woman singing a lullaby to her child. The mother is talking about how peaceful and innocent her child’s face looks. The text shares that the child’s father is dead and the mother is trembling in hope that the child survives its frail infancy. This trembling is demonstrated in the tempo markings and the grace notes in the melody.

Dors entre mes bras,  
enfant plein de charmes!  
Tu ne connais pas  
les soucis, les larmes;  
tu ris en dormant,  
à ton doux sourire,  
mon coeur se déchire;  
dors, ô mon enfant!

Dors sur les genoux  
de ta pauvre mère,  
car le sort jaloux  
t’a ravi ton père;  
jeeveille en tremblant  
sur ta faible enfance,  
dors, mon espérance,  
dors, ô mon enfant!

Dors et ne crains rein,  
car si tu sommeilles,  
ton ange gardien  
ta mère, te veille,  
le repos descend  
sur ton front candide,  
dors sous mon égide,  
dors, ô mon enfant!

Sleep in my arms,  
enchanting child!  
You do not know  
worries or tears;  
you smile in your sleep,  
at your sweet smile  
my heart breaks;  
Sleep, oh my child!

Sleep on the lap  
of your poor mother  
because the jealous fate  
from you has taken your father;  
Trembling, I watch  
over your frail infancy,  
sleep, my hope,  
sleep, oh my child!

Sleep and fear nothing,  
because if you slumber,  
your guardian angel,  
your mother, watches you;  
sleep descends  
over your innocent face,  
sleep under my protection  
sleep, oh my child!

Translation by: Bard Suverkrop

References:

Accompaniment

The accompaniment for “Dors, mon enfant” is difficult. There are three independent voices and the right hand plays continuous sixteenth notes that feel very quick in this piece. The piano accompaniment is composed of a rocking left hand and a chromatic scalar and leaping right hand pattern. The rocking left hand evokes the rhythm of a mother rocking her child to sleep while the more complicated right hand gives insight into the stressed and worried mind of the her. The dynamics are challenging as the accompaniment never gets louder than piano. Throughout the piece, the piano accompaniment is marked as pianissimo with repetitive crescendo/diminuendo hairpin patterns.
“L’Attente”

The second piece in *Trois Melodies*, “L’Attente” (The Expectation), is a delightfully charming piece full of recurring melodic motives and enchanting storytelling. The text for this piece comes from Victor Hugo’s poem set, *Les orientales*. Hugo (1802-1885), a novelist, dramatist, and poet whose work remains popular today, is regarded as the most important of the French Romantic writers and wrote this set of poems in 1829. The poems are all inspired by the Orient and are set in Moorish Spain, Turkey, and North Africa. The text invokes a feeling of exoticism which stands in contrast with Wagner’s later writings which will be largely Germanic and nationalistic.

**Voice Requirements**

The range of “L’Attente” is D4-G5 and the tessitura sits in the middle to high part of the staff. The melody is tonal with very few moments of chromaticism and it ascends and descends throughout the passaggio (ex 5a. mm, 38-42). The vocal line is set in 6/4 time and has a very rollicking, singable, and memorable tune. One of the pedagogical considerations of this piece is the amount of text. There are three long stanzas of text that need to be sung at the tempo marking of *Trés vive*, or very lively.

ex 5a

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In the forty-one-poem collection, Victor Hugo titled this poem “Attente” (waiting or expecting). For reasons not known, Wagner chose to title his song “L’Attente” (the expectation), in effect changing the title from a verb to a noun. This poem, number twenty in *Les orientales*, is full of charming imagery in which a speaker asks a squirrel and various birds to go high up a tree and into the sky to look for their beloved returning home on a horse. Interestingly, Hugo starts this French poem with a two-word Spanish dedication, that is not in the body of the text. The dedication is “Esperaba, desperada”, “I was waiting, desperate”. This adds a sense of desperation and expectation to this up tempo, lively, song that could easily seem happy and hopeful.

Monte, écureuil, monte au grand chêne,
sur la branche des cieux prochaine,
qui plie et tremble comme un jonc.
Cigogne, aux vieilles tours fidèle,
o, vole et monte à tire d’aile
de l’église à la citadelle,
du haut clocher au grand donjon.

Vieil aigle, monte de ton aire
à la montagne centenaire
que blanchit l’hiver éternel!
Et toi qu’en ta couche inquiète
jamais l’aube ne vit muette,
monte, monte, vive alouette,
vive alouette, monte au ciel!

Et maintenant, du haut de l’arbre,
des flèches de la tour de marbre,
du grand mont, du ciel enflammé,
à l’horizon, parmi la brume,
voyez-vous flotter une plume,
et courir un cheval qui fume,

Climb, squirrel, climb the tall oak,
to the branch next to the sky,
That bends and trembles like a reed.
Stork, faithful to the old towers,
oh! fly and climb on swift wing
from the church to the citadel,
from the high steeple to the large keep.

Old eagle, ascend from your eyrie
to the ancient mountain
whitened by eternal winter!
And you who in your restless nest,
never have agreed the dawn in silence
ascend, ascend, lively lark,
lively lark, ascend into the sky!

And now, from the top of the tree,
from the spires of the tower of marble
from the great mountain, from the flaming sky,
on the horizon, in the mist,
can you see a bopping feather,
and a galloping, steaming horse.

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et revenir ma bien-aimé? and my beloved returning?
Translation by: Bard Suverkrop

Accompaniment

The accompaniment for “L’Attente” is difficult with rapidly repeating eighth note triads, dense chords, and octave jumps. The 6/4 time signature and tempo marking of Très vive reflect both the desperate longing to see the lover and the galloping horse hooves as he returns home. This piano accompaniment contains dense chords and octave jumps. The triads occur in both hands with several four-note chords (ex5b. mm, 31-32). There are extreme dynamics with quick one measure crescendos and decrescendos between forte and piano.

ex 5b

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“Mignonne”

The final piece in *Trois Melodies* is the sweet, lyrical, and gentle “Mignonne” (Sweetheart), the text of which comes from an ode by 16th century French poet Pierre de Ronsard (1524-1585) titled “Ode de Cassandra”. This ode comes from Ronsard’s five book collection *Les Odes*. Ronsard was the leader of the literary group *La Pléiade*. This group of seven French writers had the goal of elevating the French language and are considered the first representatives of French renaissance poetry after reviving verse forms such as Pindaric and Horatian odes and the Virgillian epic. 50

**Voice Requirements**

The range of “Mignonne” is C#4-G5 and the tessitura lies mostly in the mid-upper staff. The tempo marking is *Gracieux* (gracious) and there are instructions for the singer to be very soft and tender through the markings *Trés doux* and *tendre*, creating an apt environment for a text that’s being sung to a sweetheart. The melody is tonal with large leaps and a few ornaments. One of the biggest pedagogical considerations in this piece is breath management. There are very few places to breathe in some of the lines, with only an eighth rest to take a quick breath (ex6a, mm.41-44).

![ex 6a](image)

comme à cet - te fleur la _vieil - les - se fe - ra ter - nir_ vo-tre beau - té;

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Text

Although this ode is dedicated to a woman named Cassandra, the name is never mentioned in the text, allowing the “Mignonne” or “sweetheart” to be anyone, making this piece more accessible to any singer. The romantic, yet melancholy text describes how nature makes beauty fade, so it is important to relish the time that you have as being beautiful before age withers you like a rose.

Mignonne, allons voir si la rose, Sweetheart, let us see if the rose,
qui ce matin avait déclose that opened this morning
sa robe de pourpre au soleil, its crimson robe to the sun,
 n’a point perdu cette vesprée, has lost, at evening,
les plis de sa robe pourprée the folds of its crimson robe
et son teint au vôtre pareil. and its color, which is like yours.

Las! voyez comme en peu d’espace, Alas! see how in a short while,
Mignonne, elle a, dessus la place, Sweetheart, it has, over the place,
Las! Las! ses beautés laisse choir’! Alas! Alas! let its beauties fall!
Ô vrai ment marâtre nature! Nature is truly a cruel mother!
Puisqu’une telle fleur ne durem when such a flower only lasts,
que du matin jusques au soir! but from morning until the evening!

Or donc, écoutez-moi, Mignonne: Now therefore, hear me, Sweetheart:
tandis que votre âge fleuronne while your age flowers
dans sa plus verte nouveauté, in its most green newness,
cueillez, cueillez votre jeunesse: let us gather, let us gather your youth:
comme à cette fleur la veillesse old age, as with this flower,
fera ternir votre beauté. will cause your beauty to fade.

Translation by: Bard Suverkrop

Accompaniment

The accompaniment for “Mignonne” is difficult. It consists mostly of a lyrical right hand melody with an “oom-pah-pah” bass, which would not seem too challenging. However, the multiple voices, large extended hand positions, and four-note chords make

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this piece more difficult than it appears on first glance. The dynamic markings pose a challenge as well because the pianist has to play the entire piece at a piano or pianissimo volume while still honoring the heavily accented areas of the accompaniment (ex6b. mm, 20-25).

ex 6b
“Tout n’est qu’images fugitives… (Soupir)”

“Tout n’est qu’images fugitives…”, also titled “Soupir” or “Sigh”, is replete with expressive soaring melodies that beautifully depict the splendor of nature. This song was written in 1840 in the same time period as *Trois Melodies*. Wagner was destitute during this time in Paris, recalling in his autobiography that they had to pawn most of their items to survive, including their wedding rings. Wagner was trying to appeal to a French audience with these Paris pieces. He was desperate for money and wrote these songs hoping they would be popular and profitable. Unfortunately for Wagner, his French songs remained unpopular for many years.

**Voice Requirements**

The range of “Tout n’est qu’images fugitives…” is C4-G5 with the tessiture in the middle range of the staff. The melody is tonal and repetitive with large leaps and partial chromatic scales (ex7a. mm, 33-36). There are many dotted rhythms in the vocal line that need to be sung with a feeling of legato so that they do not become too pedantic or militaristic. The voice should sound like it is sighing over the accompaniment, as the second title acts as an instruction to the singer.

![ex 7a](image)

The text for “Tout n’est qu’images fugitives…” comes from the French poet Jean Reboul (1796-1864). Born in Nismes, France, Reboul is known as the “baker-poet of Nismes”. In addition to his work as a poet, he had a lifelong career as a baker. The text is in three stanzas and says that there is no truth, radiance, or calm in anything but the sky. The poem also talks about mortality and humanity and how everything fades away. The expressiveness of the poem is intensified in Wagner’s setting of the text; the vocal line leaps when the text refers to the sky or heaven and there is heavy chromaticism when the text refers to the artificiality and obstacles of life.

Tout n’est qu’images fugitives, All is naught but a fleeting dream, 
coupe d’amertume ou de miel, draught of bitterness or honey,  
chansons joyeuses ou plaintives songs of joy or sorrow  
abusent des lèvres fictives; issuing from deceitful lips;  
il n’est rien de vrai, que le ciel, there is no truth but in the heavens,  
que le ciel! but in the heavens!

Tout soleil nait, s’élève et tombe Every day the sun is born, rises, and sets;  
tout trône est artificial; every throne is artificial;  
la plus haute gloire succombe, every glory fades,  
et rien n’est brillant que le ciel, everything vanishes into the grave. 
que le ciel! Nothing is more radiant than the sky, 
que le ciel! than the sky!

Navigateur d’un jour d’orage, Sailor on a stormy day,  
jouet des vagues, le mortel, mortal plaything of the waves,  
repoussé de chaque rivage, repelled from every shore,  
ne voit qu’écueils sur son passage, nothing but obstacles ahead,  
et rien n’est calme que le ciel, nothing calm but the skies,  
que le ciel! but the skies!  

Translation by: Carla Maria Verdino-Süllwold

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Accompaniment

The accompaniment for “Tout n’est qu’images fugitives…” is difficult with extended hand positions, tremolos, four-note chords, and rocking 32nd note patterns (ex 7b. mm, 33-34). The tempo is a challenging *Agitato*, and there is a great deal of articulation. The accompaniment is illustrating the frantic and “busy” qualities of earth, while the vocal line is focusing on the calm and peace that you can find above all of that, in the sky.

ex 7b
“Les deux grenadiers”

The dramatic and heart-wrenching “Les deux grenadiers” was written in 1840 in Paris, at the same time as Wagner’s other French pieces. This piece was set to a French translation by Francois-Adolphe Loeve-Veimar (1801-1854) of German text by Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), whom Wagner met while living in Paris. Wagner would eventually use Heine’s retelling of the Flying Dutchman legend for his opera Der fliegende Holländer. As with the previously discussed French songs, “Les deux grenadiers” was not popular. Wagner had such a hard time getting it published that he decided to have the piece engraved at his own expense; however, not a single copy of this publication sold. Later, “Les deux grenadiers” would be published with the original Heine German printed beneath the French translation. Wagner was furious about this because the different meter of the German language fitted the composition poorly. He protested against this publication, but after being threatened with legal action for libel he sent an apology in deference.55

Voice Requirements

Wagner wrote this piece for a baritone, with the range of A2-F#4. The tessitura is low, mostly staying in the lower half of the staff. This piece has long lines with some complex rhythmic moments. There is quite a bit of chromatic motion in the vocal line, but it is generally supported by the piano accompaniment. The tempo marking is Moderato with later instructions of maestoso (majestic) and un peu plus vite (a little bit faster).

55 Richard, Wagner, My Life, 137.
The text for “Les deux grenadiers” comes from a poem from Heinrich Heine’s 1827 collection named Buch der Lieder, or “Book of Songs”. Wagner used a French translation of this poem by Francois-Adolphe Loeve-Veimar, but Robert Schumann (1810-1856) famously set the original German text in his art song “Die beiden Grenadiere”. This text tells the story of two grenadiers of Napoleon’s army who are returning home after being Russian prisoners of war. The term grenadier describes a soldier whose original job was to hurl grenades. These men were characterized by their strength, courage, and their height. By the Napoleonic wars, grenades were seldom used but grenadiers were still elite troops.

Richard Wagner and Robert Schumann wrote their settings of this text at around the same time. Coincidentally, although neither man knew the other man’s work, they both integrated the French national anthem, La Marseillaise, into their songs. Wagner put the tune in the accompaniment, while Schumann used it in the vocal line. In the story, the two grenadiers are portrayed as very different men. Both soldiers are shocked upon arriving in Europe and discovering that Napoleon and his army have been defeated at Waterloo. However, one man says that although he cares nothing for his own life, he has a wife and sons that he must return home to support. The other grenadier, who is badly wounded, passionately proclaims that he does not care for his family, they can beg if they are hungry, he only cares about his Emperor. He then asks his comrade to take his

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body back to France and bury him with military honors, where he will wait to raise from
the dead to help Napoleon again.58

Lontemps captifs chez le Russe lointain,
deuX grenadiers
RentreX vers la France;
déjà leurs pieds touchent
le sol germain;
mais on leur dit:
Pour vous plus d’espérance;
l’Europe a triomphé,
vos braves ont vécu!

C’en est fait
de la France
Et de la grande armée!
Et rendant son épée,
l’Empereur est captive
et vaincu!
Ils ont frémi:
chacun d’eux sent tomber
des pleurs brûlants sur sa mâle figure.

“Je suis bien mal”... dit l’un,
“je vois couler de flots de sang
de ma vielle blessure!”

“Tout est fini,” dit l’autre,
“ô, je voudrais mourir!
mais au pays mes fils m’attendent,
et leur mère,
qui mourrait de misère!
J’entends leur voix plaintive;
il faut vivre et souffrir!”

“Femmes, enfants,
que m’importe!
Mon coeur par un seul
voeu tient encore à la terre.
Ils mendieront
s’ils ont fain,
l’Empereur, il est captive, mon Empereur!...
mon Empereur!...

Longtime captives of the Russians,
two grenadiers
were returning to France;
as soon as their feet touch
German soil;
they heard it said:
“There is no hope for you!
Europe has triumped;
your brave have survived!

But hear what has happened
to France
and her great army!
Surrendering his sword,
the Emperor has been taken captive
and defeated!”
They shuddered:
each of them felt fall
hot tears on his manly cheek.

“I am very ill,” said the one.
“I see streams of blood flow
from my old wound!”

“Everything is over,” said the other.
“Oh, I would like to die!
But at home my sons await me
with their mother
who would die of misery!
I hear their plaintive voices;
I must live on and suffer!”

“Wives, children,
what do they matter to me!
My heart is still bound by a single
vow to my country.
They can go begging
if they are hungry,
the Emperor, he is captive,
my Emperor!...
Ô frère, écoute-moi,… je meurs!
Aux rives que j’aimais,
rendef du moins mon cadavre,
et du fer de ta lance,
ausoldat de la France
creusènfunèbre lit sous le soleil français!

Fixe à mon sein
glacé par le trépas
la croix d’honneur que
mon sang a gagnée;
dans le cercueil couche-moi
l’arme au bras,
mets sous ma main la garde
d’une épée;
de là je prêterai l’oreille au
moindre bruit,
jusqu’au jour, où tonnant sur la terre
ébranlée,
l’écho de la mêlée m’appellera
du fond de l’éternelle nuit!

Peut-être bien qu’en ce choc meurtrier,
Sous la mitraille et les feux
de la bombe,
monEmpereur poussera son coursier
vers le gazon qui couvrira
ma tombe.
Alors je sortirai du cercueil,
tout armé;
et sous les plis sacrés du drapeau
tricolore,
j’irai defendre encore
la France et l’Empereur,
l’Empereur bien aimé."

Translation by: Bard Suverkrop

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Accompaniment

The accompaniment for “Les deux grenadiers” is difficult. There are four and five note chords throughout the piece. Several times, the right and left hand play chords that make up nine notes at one time (ex 8a. mm,19-21). The dynamics generally crescendo or diminuendo slowly but there are instances of extreme changes in dynamics. The hand spacing changes frequently and there are multiple independent voices. There are moments in the accompaniment where the left hand is doing nothing but rapid tremolos while the right hand is playing four note chords. This is a very dramatic accompaniment that is a fitting partner to a very dramatic text and story line.

ex 8a
“Adieux de Marie Stuart”

The most operatic of the French songs that Wagner wrote while in Paris is “Adieux de Marie Stuart” (Farewell of Mary Stuart) written in 1840. This song contains coloratura passages and long dramatic lines. The text for this song comes from French songwriter Pierre Jean de Béranger (1780-1857), who was known for his political writings and his satire.60

Voice Requirements

“Adieux de Marie Stuart” has a range of D4-C6 and was written for a soprano with an agile voice. The tessitura lies mostly on the staff and the melody is tonal with a few moments of chromaticism. This piece contains several passages of fast coloratura and many instances of ornamentation (ex 9a. mm, 66-68). The rhythm of this piece is more complex than Wagner’s other French songs, with dotted eighth notes, triplets, sextuplets, and nontuplets. This piece has very long lines that make breath management a challenge, along with short, broken lines that make legato singing more difficult. There is a great deal of freedom for the singer with the markings of *avec abandon* (with abandon) and several notations of *à volonté* (at will). These marking occur as Marie Stuart continues to repeat the opening text, intensifying the statement that leaving France is like dying. This piece is much more operatic in nature than his other French songs and the demands of the vocal line demonstrate this.

The text comes from Pierre Jean de Béranger and the story recounts Mary Queen of Scots tearful farewell to France. Mary Stuart (1542-1587) became the Queen of Scotland after the death of her father King James V when she was six days old. She was raised in France while Scotland was run by regents. At the age of fifteen, she married the son of King Henry II of France, Francis. After Henry II’s death, she reigned as queen consort for almost two years before Francis died and made her a widow at the age of eighteen. After the death of her husband, Mary had to return home to Scotland as their queen. The text for this piece recounts Mary saying farewell to France, the country she was raised in and loved.\footnote{Britannica Academic, s.v. "Mary," accessed February 21, 2017, http://academic.eb.com.access.library.miami.edu/levels/collegiate/article/Mary/51212.}

There is a great deal of textual repetition in this piece. The first two exclamations are repeated four times as Mary continues to say farewell to France. The last thirteen measure of the vocal line are a constant repetition of the phrase “te quitter c’est mourir!”

Adieu, charmant pays de France que je dois tant chérir!
Berceau de mon heureuse enfance, adieu! te quitter c’est mourir!
Toi que j’adoptai pour patrie et d’où je crois me voir bannir,
Farewell, charming country of France that I must cherish so much!
Cradle of my blissful youth, farewell! To leave you is to die!
You, which I have taken for my motherland and from which I see myself banished,
entends les adieux de Marie,
France, et garde son souvenir.

Le vent souffle, on quitte la plage,
Et, peu touché de mes sanglots,
dieu, pour me rendre à ton rivage,
dieu n'a point soulevé les flots.

Lorsqu'aux yeux du peuple que j'aime,
je ceignis les lis éclatants,
il applaudit au rang suprême
moins qu'aux charmes de mon printemps.

En vain la grandeur souveraine
m'attend chez le sombre Écossais;
je n'ai désiré d'être reine
que pour régner sur des Français.

France, du milieu des alarmes
la noble fille des Stuarts,
comme en ce jour, qui voit ses larmes,
vers toi tournera ses regards.

Mais, dieu! le vaisseau trop rapide
déjà vogue sous d'autres cieux;
et la nuit, dans un voile humide,
dérobe tes bords à mes yeux!

Adieu, charmant pays de France
que je dois tant chérir!
Berceau de mon heureuse enfance,
adieu! te quitter c'est mourir!

Hear the farewells of Mary,
France and keep her memory.

The wind blows, we leave the coast,
and, hardly touched by my sobs
God, to go to your shore,
God did not lift the tide.

When, in the eyes of the people I love
I bounded the radiant lilies,
they applauded to the supreme extent
less than to the charms of my spring.

In vain, the sovereign grandeur
awaits me at the dark Scottish;
I did not wish to be Queen
only to rule over the French.

France, from the midst of the alarms
the noble daughter of the Stuarts,
as in this day, who sees her tears
to you will turn her eyes.

But God, the rapid ship
already sails under other skies;
and at night, under a thick veil,
robs your edges from my eyes!

Farewell, charming country of France
that I must cherish so much!
Cradle of my blissful youth,
farewell! To leave you is to die!

**Accompaniment**

The piano accompaniment for “Adieux de Marie Stuart” is difficult. There are
four-note chords, large arpeggiated patterns, and extended hand positions. There is quite
a bit of ornamentation with the use of frequent tremolos, rolled chords, and grace notes.
The dynamic extremes help to define this accompaniment as difficult. There are rapid
changes in the dynamics; for example, there will be measures of *forte* or *fortissimo* and
then a sudden drop to *piano*, followed by a rapid crescendo back to *forte*. These dynamic extremes exhibit the intense emotions of Marie Stuart leaving the country she considers to be her home.
“Gruß seiner Treuen an Friedrich August den Geliebten”

Wagner wrote “Gruß seiner Treuen an Friedrich August den Geliebten” (Greetings to the Beloved Frederick August) in 1844 as part of his duties as Second Kappellmeister at the King of Saxony’s court in Dresden. This charming and folk-like piece was originally a choral tribute to the king but has been re-written for solo voice and piano.\(^{62}\) The text for this tribute was written by Richard Wagner himself to mark the return of King Friedrich August II of Saxony after a trip abroad.\(^{63}\)

**Voice Requirements**

The range of “Gruß seiner Treuen an Friedrich August den Geliebten” is D4-E5 with the tessitura lying mostly in the middle of the staff. The melody is tonal and repetitive with three verses alternated by refrain. In the refrain of the piece, the melody moves through the passaggio with an octave scale from G5-G4 (ex 10a. mm, 35-39) and several partial chromatic scales. Because this song is written in a choral “hymn-like” style, there are plenty of places for a singer to breathe and the melody is not very challenging. The strophic, hymn-like quality of the piece, paired with the simple melody illustrates the fact that this song would have been sung by everyday citizens, not trained musicians.

**ex 10a**

\[\text{ex 10a}\]

\[\text{ex 10a}\]

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\(^{62}\) Millington, *Wagner, Grove Music Online.*

The text for “Gruß seiner Treuen an Friedrich August den Geliebten” was written by Richard Wagner. This is important to note as Wagner would eventually write the libretto to all his operas.  Wagner was honored to write this piece for the king, and it is the only one of his art songs where he composed the text as well as the music. There is a great deal of text in this piece with three verses alternated by refrain.

Im treuen Sachsenland
er tönt die frohe Kunde,
von Englands fernem Strand
sein König kehrt zurück;
sie klingt wie Jubelton,
sie geht von Mund zu Munde,
der Vater preist dem Sohn,
das Kind dem Greis das Glück.

Refrain:
Sei uns gegrüßt in Deiner Lieben Mitte, an Deiner Teuren Brust, treu Deiner Väter Sitte, nah Deines Volkes Lust, sei uns gegrüßt, Du Deines Volkes Lust!

Ein Volk, so stolz, so groß,
sat gastlich Dich empfangen,
es stritt sich um das Los, dein Ehrenwirt zu sein; doch wenn von Ort zu Ort dich Ruhmesgrüß' umklangen, du dachttest unsrer dort, die Lieb' und Treu' Dir weih'n.

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,

Refrain

In steter Lieb' und Treu'
wir waren Dir nicht ferne, mit jedem Tage neu des Volkes Herz Dir schlug; die freundlich Dir gelacht,
wir grüßten sie, die Sterne,
we greeted the stars
wir preisen jetzt die Macht,
which praise now the might,
die uns zurück Dich trug.
which carried you back to us.

Refrain

Accompaniment

The accompaniment for “Gruß seiner Treuen an Friedrich August den Geliebten” is moderate. Although it has several four-note chords that would put it in the difficult category, the rest of the accompaniment is not difficult. It is moderately more difficult than a standard block chord accompaniment for a four-part choral piece (ex 10b, mm.25-28).

ex 10b
In 1857-1858 Wagner wrote five songs set to poetry by Mathilde Wesendonck (1828-1902). These _Fünf Gedichte für eine Frauenstimme mit Pianoforte-Begleitung_ are commonly referred to as the _Wesendonck Lieder_. These pieces were originally written for voice and piano, but were later orchestrated by Felix Mottl under the direct supervision of Wagner.\(^{65}\) Two of the pieces, “Im Triebhaus” and “Träume” are designated as “_Studie zu Tristan und Isolde_”. The _Wesendonck Lieder_ are the most frequently performed of Wagner’s solo vocal works for piano and voice. Although no expert addresses why this is the case, it could be hypothesized that this is because they are a complete set of songs, they were orchestrated, they are a precursor to the harmonic language of _Tristan und Isolde_, and the relationship between Wagner and the Wesendoncks makes for a good story. However, all of this is simply conjecture as there is no way of knowing why these songs are more popular than his other songs.

The five pieces in the set are:

1. Der Engel
2. Stehe still!
3. Im Treibhaus
4. Schmerzen!
5. Träume

Some editions of the _Wesendonck Lieder_ spell the name without the “c”, however that is not the accurate spelling for the pieces. It was not until after 1900 that the Wesendonck family went back to the likely original spelling of Wesendonk. For this

paper, the spelling Wesendonck will be used because that is how the Wesendonck’s spelled their name when the songs were written.\textsuperscript{66}

It is impossible to talk about these songs without discussing the complicated relationship between Richard Wagner and the Wesendoncks, Mathilde and Otto. Otto Wesendonck was a wealthy silk merchant who was a great fan of Wagner’s music and frequently funded his ventures, beginning with the Zurich “Wagner festival” in May 1853. Otto and Mathilde Wesendonck had a happy marriage, although it is interesting to note that Mathilde’s name was originally Agnes but Otto asked her to change it. His eldest sister and his first wife who died on their honeymoon bore the name Mathilde; it is unknown if Agnes ever knew about this.\textsuperscript{67}

In 1857, Otto Wesendonck built a villa on the edge of Zurich, and allowed Wagner and Minna (still his wife) to move into the cottage that he owned next door. Wagner called the place “Asyl” or “asylum” because he found the “cottage on the green hill” so peaceful. Wagner’s original attraction to Mathilde Wesendonck was intellectual, but by this point he had fallen completely in love with Mathilde and would begin writing his opera \textit{Tristan und Isolde} as a dedication of his love. Letters from Wagner say that he considered Mathilde to be his first and only love. Sources are torn on whether this relationship was ever consummated, but Wagner maintains that they remained chaste. Love letters between the two were intercepted by Minna which resulted in her being sent away for her mental health. A few months later, after Mathilde rejected an elopement proposal from Wagner, the relationship, if there ever was one, was mostly over. Mathilde


\textsuperscript{67} Vazsonyi, \textit{Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia}, 712.
Wesendonck continued to send him poems but carried on her happy marriage with her husband. Meanwhile, Richard Wagner and Minna Wagner lived apart until her death in 1866. Minna blamed Mathilde for the end of her marriage.\textsuperscript{68}

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 713.
“Der Engel”

“Der Engel” (the Angel) is the first song in the Wesendonck Lieder. This short, lyrical song is full of climbing melodic lines which show the yearning for the bliss of heaven that is described in the text.

**Voice Requirements**

The range of “Der Engel” is D4-G5 and the tessitura lies mostly on the staff. The melody is tonal with a few large leaps and some chromaticism. The rhythm is not very challenging. The piece is in a steady 4/4 with some ties across the bar lines that add tension to the melody (ex 11a, mm.3-8). The dynamic changes are slow and steady. There are a few notations for the singer such as gesteigert, aber zart (increasing, but delicately) when the text discusses fervent prayer and mit Enthusiasmus (with enthusiasm) at the moment pain is ended and the spirit is lifted to heaven by an angel. The tempo is sehr ruhig bewegt (very peaceful movement) which beautifully sets the atmosphere of the text by showing the peaceful reverence of angels and heaven.

**Text**

The text for “Der Engel” comes from poetry by Mathilde Wesendonck. This poem contains many of the hallmarks of Romanticism and Romantic poetry. The reverence of nature and use of the supernatural in the references to angels, along with the
emotional descriptions of spiritual experiences place this poem securely in the Romantic category of literature.\textsuperscript{69}

\begin{verbatim}
In der Kindheit frühen Tagen   In the early days of childhood
hört ich oft von Engeln sagen, I often heard talk of angels,
die des Himmels hehre Wonne who would heaven’s sublime bliss
tauschen mit der Erdensonne, exchange for the earth’s sun.
daß, wo bang ein Herz So that, wherever a heart, anxious with
in Sorgen worry,
schmachtet vor der Welt verborgen, languishes hidden away from the world,
daß, wo still es will so that, wherever a heart wishes to silently
verbluten, bleed
und vergeh’n in Tränenfluten, and melt away in a flood of tears,
daß, wo brünstig sein Gebet so that, wherever a heart’s fervent prayer
einzig um Erlösung fleht, is only pleading for release,
da der Engel niederschwebt, there an angel floats-down,
und es sanft gen Himmel hebt. and gently lifts it to heaven.

Ja, es stieg auch mir ein Engel nieder, Yes, an angel has also come down to me,
und auf leuchtendem Gefieder and on shining wings
führt er, ferne jedem Schmerz, it leads, far from every pain,
meinen Geist nun himmwarts! my spirit now heavenwards!

Translation by: Bard Suverkrop\textsuperscript{70}
\end{verbatim}

\textbf{Accompaniment}

The accompaniment for “Der Engel” is difficult. There are four and five note chords, large expansions, frequent changes of hand positions, and rapid changes of intervals. The pianist has the opening marking of “sehr zart und weich” (very delicate and soft) and the dynamic markings stay mostly between piano and pianissimo with one brief crescendo to a mezzo-forte. These markings show that it is important for the pianist to have a delicate and gentle touch while they help to paint the picture of a spirit ascending into heaven.

\textsuperscript{70} Suverkrop, Bard. Der Engel. 2010. IPA Source. Accessed November 13, 2016. https://www.ipasource.com.access.library.miami.edu/ipasource/download/file/id/MC40MzIyMjgwMCAxNDg5NTMyOTg4MTk3NDQ,/\_\_SID=U.
“Stehe still!”

“Stehe still!” (Stand still!) is the second piece in the Wesendonck Lieder. This dramatic piece pairs a fast section with lots of large intervalllic leaps, and a slow and static section that moves in a mostly stepwise pattern. The fast section is indicative of the frantic passion and racing pulses discussed in the text. After the speaker slows their breath and pulse, they are able to relax into the sweet oblivion of bliss and the melody slows and lengthens to show this emotional change.

**Voice Requirements**

The range of “Stehe Still!” is C4-G5 and the tessitura lies mostly in the middle to upper part of the staff. The melody is tonal and alternates between sections of large leaps and sections that are mostly scalar in nature (ex 12a. mm, 22-25). The melody ascends and descends in stepwise motion through the passaggio. The rhythm is straight-forward with dotted eighth note patterns in a quick 6/8 time signature. The tempo marking changes from Bewegt (with movement) to Mäßiger als zuvor (more moderately than before) and finally changes to Langsam (slowly). The tempo markings gradually slow as the singer relaxes into the peaceful bliss of physical and spiritual love. The singer has notations of wie gänzlich sich verlierend (completely losing yourself) when the text begins to talk about the soul being calmed and mit gesteigertem Vortrag (with increased speech-like quality) when man has solved the riddles of Nature.

**ex 12a**

![Ex 12a notation](image)
As with the rest of the set, the text for this piece comes from Mathilde Wesendonck’s poetry. This piece is clearly Romantic as it talks about the supernatural, the eternal, reverence of nature, and the emotional experience of combining souls and bodies.

Sausendes, brausendes Rad der Zeit,  
Messer du der Ewigkeit;  
leuchtende Sphären im weiten All,  
die ihr umringt den Weltenball;  
urewige Schöpfung, halte doch ein,  
genug des Werdens, lass mich sein!

Roaring, thundering wheel of time,  
measure of eternity;  
shining spheres in the wide universe,  
you who surround the world’s globe;  
eternal creation, stop  
enough of becoming, let me be!

Halte an dich, zeugende Kraft,  
Urgerdanke,  
der ewig schafft!  
Hemmet den Atem, stillet den Drang,  
schweiget nur eine Sekunde lang!  
Schwellende Pulse, fesselt den Schlag;  
ende, des Wollens ew’ger Tag!

Cease, creating power,  
primal thought  
which drives one to eternally create!  
Slow the breath, still the urge,  
be silent just a second long!  
Swelling pulses, restrain your beat,  
end the day of eternal willing!

Daß in selig süßem Vergessen  
ich mög’ alle Wonnen ermessen!  
Wenn Aug’ in Auge wonnig trinken,  
Seele ganz in Seele versinken;  
Wesen in Wesen sich wieder findet,  
und alles Hoffen’s Ende sich kündet;  
die Lippe verstummt  
in staunendem Schweigen,  
keinen Wunsch mehr  
will das Inn’re zeugen:  
erkennt der Mensch des Ew’gen Spur,  
und lös’t dein Rätsel, heil’ge Natur!

That in blessed, sweet oblivion  
I may all bliss measure!  
When an eye drinks bliss from another,  
a soul completely sinks into another;  
a being finds itself again in another being,  
and the hoped for goal is neared,  
the lips are mute  
in astounded silence,  
the soul no longer feels  
the urge to produce:  
man perceives eternity’s path,  
and solves your riddle, holy Nature!

Translation by: Bard Suverkrop  

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https://www.ipasource.com.access.library.miami.edu/ipasource/download/file/id/MC4zMzEyOTYwMCAxNDg5NTMyOTk1MTk3NDU,/?___SID=U.
Accompaniment

The accompaniment for “Stehe still!” is difficult. It contains four and five note chords, rapid scalar and arpeggiated passages that reflect the frantic passion of the opening phrases of text, and large expansive hand positions with frequent changes of hand spacing (ex 12b. mm, 7-10). In the Langsam section of the piece, the accompaniment has the marking “mit allmählicher Steigerung der Stärke” (with gradual increase of strength) which matches the declamatory style of the singer in the last lines of the piece.

ex 12b
“Im Treibhaus”

“Im Treibhaus” (In the greenhouse) is the third song in the *Wesendonck Lieder* and the first one that is designated as a “Studie zu Tristan und Isolde”. This sad and plaintive song is in two sections; one is filled with long ascending lines, while the other is filled with broken phrases and passages. The first section is a narrative of what the singer is seeing in the greenhouse, as she is imagining the pain of the plants. In the second, more fragmented section of the song, the singer begins to speak about her own suffering and pain. Wagner wrote his opera *Tristan und Isolde* as a declaration of his love for Mathilde Wesendonck, imagining himself as Tristan and Mathilde as his Isolde. It is quite fitting that he used her text as a study for his opera that would be based on their love.

**Voice Requirements**

The range of “Im Treibhaus” is C4-F5 with the tessitura lying mostly in the middle to lower part of the staff. This song is in two parts. In the first section, *Langsam und schwer* (slow and heavy), the melody is climbing and mostly scalar with many moments of chromaticism with frequent accidentals that are not in the key signature. The second section of the song, *Streng im Takt* (strictly in tempo), is similar in terms of melodic line but the lines are frequently broken with rests instead of being long expansive vocal lines (ex 13a. mm, 34-38). This makes sense textually as in the beginning of the piece the singer is simply describing things they see in the greenhouse. In the second section, the singer begins to compare themselves to the greenhouse and remark upon their similarities.
This highly passionate Wesendonck text is filled with Romantic imagery. The text shows a reverence of nature, emotional suffering, and the desire for home. This desire for one’s homeland is a theme in *Tristan und Isolde* as Isolde has left her native Ireland and is travelling to an unfamiliar land.

Hochgewölbte Blätterkronen,
Baldachine von Smaragd,
Kinder ihr aus fernen Zonen,
saget mir, warum ihr klagt?

Schweigend neigt ihr die Zweige,
malet Zeichen in die Luft,
und der Leiden stummer Zeuge
steiget aufwärts, süßer Duft.

Weit in sehndem Verlangen
breitet ihr die Arme aus,
und umschlinget wahnbefangen
öder Leere nicht’gen Graus.

Wohl, ich weiß es, arme Pflanze;
ein Geschicke teilen wir,
ob umstrahlt von Licht und Glanze,
unsre Heimat ist nicht hier!

Und wie froh die Sonne scheidet
von des Tages leerem Schein,
hület der, der wahrhaft leidet,
sich in Schweigens Dunkel ein.

Stille wird’s ein säuselnd Weben
füllet bang den dunklen Raum:
schwere Tropfen seh’ ich schweben  
ant der Blätter grünem Saum.  

I see heavy drops suspended  
on the leaves’ green edge.  

Translation by: Bard Suverkrop

Accompaniment

The accompaniment for “Im Triebhaus” is moderately difficult with some four note chords, expansive hand position, and tremolos. The slow tempo of the piece enables this categorization to be moderately difficult instead of difficult. The accompaniment opens with a climbing theme that is reminiscent of the prelude to Tristan und Isolde and is repeated frequently throughout the piece (ex 13b. mm, 1-3).

ex 13b

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https://www.ipasource.com.access.library.miami.edu/ipasource/download/file/id/MC44MTQ5MTkwMCAxNDg5NTMyOTkwMTk3NDY,/___SID=U.
“Schmerzen”

“Schmerzen” (Pain) is the fourth and shortest song in the Wesendonck Lieder. This striking, lyrical piece is only thirty-one measures long but is filled with angst and drama.

**Voice Requirements**

“Schmerzen” has the largest range of all the Wesendonck Lieder of a thirteenth from C4-Ab5. The tessitura lies mostly in the middle of the staff. The melody is tonal and often scalar with measures that are one octave scales in a dotted rhythm (ex 14a. mm, 3-6). The tempo is Langsam und breit (slow and expansive) throughout with one molto ritenuto (very held back). The singer has a marking of mit großer Steigerung (with great increase) which brings passion, intensity, and drama to the ending of the piece.

**ex 14a**

![Musical notation image](image)

**Text**

This Mathilde Wesendonck text is full of imagery. The speaker is saying that the sun dies and rises every day. The final line “and if death brings new life, and grief gives way to bliss: oh, how thankful I am that nature has given me such anguish!” is a very poignant ending to this piece that makes “Pain” seem like a beautiful thing.

Sonne, weinest jeden Abend  
dir die schönen Augen rot,  
wen im Meeresspiegel badend  
dich erreicht der frühe Tod;  
doch ersehst in alter Pracht,  
Glorie der düst’ren Welt,  
zu am Morgen neu erwacht,  
Sun, every evening  
you weep your lovely eyes red,  
when in the sea’s mirror bathing  
you are reached by the early death.  
Yet rise in your old splendor.  
you, the glory of the gloomy world,  
you at morning newly awakened,
wie ein stolzer Siegesheld! like a proud victorious hero!

Ach, wie sollte ich da klagen, Ah, why should I then complain/lament,
wie, mein Herz, so schwer dich sehn, why, my heart, do I see you so heavy,
muß die Sonne selbst verzagen, does the setting sun despair,
muß die Sonne untergehn? does the setting sun die?

Und gebieret Tod nur Leben, And, if death brings new life,
geben Schmerzen Wonne nur: and grief gives way to bliss:
O wie dank ich, daß gegeben oh, how thankful I am
solche Schmerzen mir Natur! that nature has given me such anguish!

Translation by: Bard Suverkrop

Accompaniment

The accompaniment for “Schmerzen” is difficult. There are four and five note chords, large hand expansions, and extreme dynamic changes (ex 14b. mm, 8-13). This accompaniment makes it easy to see why these pieces were orchestrated as the rich accompaniment evokes the character of a full orchestra. The drama in the accompaniment matches the drama in the text and requires a sensitive pianist to partner with the singer.

ex 14b

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“Träume”

The final song in the Wesendonck Lieder is “Träume” (Dreams). This is also the second of the two pieces that are designated as “Studie zu Tristan und Isolde”. This lyrical piece with its long legato lines and passionate text is a fitting ending to this set of poems from the woman Wagner considered his first and only love, Mathilde.

Voice Requirements

The range of “Träume” is C4-Gb5 with the tessitura lying on the staff. The tempo marking is *Sehr mäßig bewegt, aber nie schleppend* (very moderately moving, but never dragging) throughout with the exception of one *ritenuto* and a brief *accelerando*. This represents the ever-evolving dream and protects the song from becoming stagnant. The melody is tonal and scalar with recurrent dotted note rhythms ensuring that the passionate intensity of the piece never wanes (ex 15a. mm, 41-45). This piece climaxes at the final uttering of “Träume” and then slowly sinks away with marking for the singer such as *nachlassend* (weakening) and *immer mehr nachlassend* (always more weakening).

ex 15a

Text

This text is strikingly beautiful with its imagery of dreams. This is fitting as Wagner maintains his relationship with Mathilde Wesendonck was never physical, so in many ways their love was like a dream, not a reality. The text is well defined as Romantic with its talk of the soul, the eternal, and equating these spiritual things to nature.
Sag, welch wunderbare Träume halten meinen Sinn umfangen, daß sie nicht wie leere Schäume sind in ödes Nichts vergangen?

Tell me, what are these wondrous dreams that embrace my senses, and have not, like empty foam, vanished into desolate nothingness?

Träume, die in jeder Stunde, jedem Tage schöner blüh'n, und mit ihrer Himmelskunde selig durch's Gemüte ziehn!

Dreams, that with each hour and day bloom fairer, and with their heavenly tidings blissfully pass through my soul!

Träume, die wie hehre Strahlen in die Seele sich versenken, dort ein ewig Bild zu malen: Allvergessen, Eingedenken!

Dreams, which like majestic rays of sunlight sink into the soul, painting there an eternal image: forgetting all, remembering one!

Träume, wie wenn Frühlingsonne aus dem Schnee die Blüten küßt, daß zu nie geahnter Wonne sie der neue Tag begrüßt, daß sie wachsen, daß sie blühen, träumend spenden ihren Duft, sanft an deiner Brust verglühen, und dann sinken in die Gruft.

Dreams, like kisses of the spring sun that bring forth blossoms from the snow, and greet each new day with such unsuspected joy, so that they grow, so that they blossom in dreaming bestow their fragrance, glowing and gently fading upon your breast, and then sinking down into the grave.

Translation by: Bard Suverkrop

Accompaniment

The accompaniment for “Träume” is difficult. There are triads in both hands, along with four and five note chords. There are multiple voices, large hand expansions, and rapid interval changes. The pianist has markings to play dolce (sweet) and wiech (soft) and the dynamic markings only reach a forte for two measures in this eighty-four measure piece.

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Chapter 4:

Summary

For this paper, fifteen of Richard Wagner’s solo vocal songs were researched and analyzed. The orchestrated solo works, fragments, songs with chorus, arias or operatic compositions of Richard Wagner were not considered in this paper. The background of each song was addressed including what was going on in Wagner’s life at the time they were written, and any note-worthy information about the poet of the text, or the text itself. A poetic translation of each text has been included. The songs were examined based on vocal requirements such as: range, tessitura, dynamic range, composer’s markings and special techniques, melodic and rhythmic aspects of the vocal line, text and diction, and suggested voice categories. Additionally, the piano accompaniments for each piece were analyzed and categorized based on the strict guidelines outlined in Chapter 1.

Conclusion

The solo vocal songs of Richard Wagner are an underperformed part of the standard classical vocal repertoire. The fifteen songs discussed in this paper contain many of the styles, colors, and textures that Wagner would later use in his operas. These songs are a form of “Wagner in miniature” that allow a student to experience what Wagnerian vocal music is like without the risk of injury to the vocal folds that is possible from attempting his arias. It is true that Wagnerian operatic works are not appropriate for every voice; however, his art songs are accessible to a large population of singers and in many ways are not any more challenging than the art songs that act as foundations of the
standard vocal repertoire. Adding awareness of Wagnerian art songs will help to
diversify the standard repertoire list and provide a good introduction to the world of
Wagnerian music to a student who is not ready to sing his operatic literature.
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### Appendix A:

#### Recommended Recordings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Album Title</th>
<th>Singer(s)</th>
<th>Label/UPC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Beethoven, Berlioz, Franz, Grieg, Liszt, Loewe, Schumann, Wagner: Songs</em></td>
<td>Thomas Hampson</td>
<td>Warner Classics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Complete Lieder: Richard Wagner</em></td>
<td>Jenni Lätilä</td>
<td>Siba Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mikko Sateila</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tommi Hakala</td>
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<td><em>Kaufmann: Wagner</em></td>
<td>Jonas Kaufmann</td>
<td>Decca 4785678</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>male recording of Wesendonck Leider</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Portrait Maureen Forrester: 1955-1963</em></td>
<td>Maureen Forrester</td>
<td>Audite 21437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Richard Wagner – Wesendonck Lieder</em></td>
<td>Marjana Lipovšek</td>
<td>Orfeo C 237 901 A</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Romantic Song Cycles: Schumann, Brahms, Wagner</em></td>
<td>Tamara Takàcs</td>
<td>Naxos 8.550400</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Singers of the Century: Lorri Lail Song Recital: Kindertotenlieder and song by Wagner, Franz, and Gluck</em></td>
<td>Lorri Lail</td>
<td>Jube Classic</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Wagner: Lieder</em></td>
<td>Michela Sburlati</td>
<td>Brilliant Classics 94451</td>
</tr>
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<td><em>Wagner: Lieder &amp; Sonate für Mathilde Wesendonck</em></td>
<td>Anne Renouprez</td>
<td>Pavane Records</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Wagner: Original Works &amp; Adaptations for Chamber Orchestra</em></td>
<td>Maria Riccarda-Wesseling</td>
<td>Coviello Classics</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Wagnerian Songs</em></td>
<td>Patrick Delcour</td>
<td>Etc KTC1276</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Zumsteeg, Loewe, Raff, Schumann, Elgar, Parker, Wagner: Lieder der Maria Stuart</em></td>
<td>Franziska Hirzel</td>
<td>Bmn-medien</td>
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Appendix B:
Chronological List of Songs with Range, Tessitura, and Suggested Voice Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song Title</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Tessitura</th>
<th>Suggested Voice Type</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Lied des Mephistopheles II”</td>
<td>B2-B3</td>
<td>Mid-upper</td>
<td>Baritone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Meine Ruh ist hin”</td>
<td>D4-G5</td>
<td>Mid-upper</td>
<td>Soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Der Tannenbaum”</td>
<td>Bb3-Eb5</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Baritone/Mezzo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Dors, mon enfant”</td>
<td>D4-F5</td>
<td>On the staff</td>
<td>Soprano/Mezzo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“L’Attente”</td>
<td>D4-G5</td>
<td>Mid-upper</td>
<td>Soprano/Mezzo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Mignonette”</td>
<td>C#4-G5</td>
<td>Mid-upper</td>
<td>Any</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Tout n’est qu’images fugitives”</td>
<td>C4-G5</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Any</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Les deux grenadiers”</td>
<td>A2-F#4</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Baritone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Adieux de Marie Stuart”</td>
<td>D4-C6</td>
<td>On the staff</td>
<td>Soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Gruß seiner Treuen an Friedrich August den Geliebten”</td>
<td>D4-E5</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Any</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Der Engel”</td>
<td>D4-G5</td>
<td>On the staff</td>
<td>Soprano/Mezzo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Stehe Still!!”</td>
<td>C4-G5</td>
<td>Mid-upper</td>
<td>Soprano/Mezzo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Im Treibhaus”</td>
<td>C4-F5</td>
<td>Mid-low</td>
<td>Soprano/Mezzo</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Schmerzen”</td>
<td>C4-Ab5</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Soprano/Mezzo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Träume”</td>
<td>C4-Gb5</td>
<td>On the staff</td>
<td>Soprano/Mezzo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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